The Chicago Daily Tribune.

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MOMENCE IN MOURNING

One Death Results from Eating of the Diseased Dried Beef

Many Persons Are in a Serious Condition and Several May Die

Momence, Ill., July 13-(Special)-The community of Momence is shrouded in gloom awaiting the outcome of a terrible malady which made its appearance last week. It is now clearly established that the malady arose from eating dried beef which was filled with animalcules. The disease is something like trichinosis. So far it has caused one death. The victim was Mrs. Dr. Shronts, who died Sunday afternoon. As far as can be learned tonight the following families are stricken and are requiring the constant care of their neighbors and friends:

Mr. Looker and two daughters.
Sam Gibeault, wife, and one child.
H. Worcester, wife and servant-girl.
B. Hall Jr. and child.
Dr. Shronts, son, and servant-girl named Miss Burton.
Mr. Hiram Hoag.
Mr. F.X. Longpre, one daughter, and one son.
Mr. Dan O'Brien, wife, and three daughters.
Mr. Scramlin and two daughters.
Mr. Ben Cullum.
Dr. Keyser's daughter.
T.W. Denny and wife.
Mr. Lon Brooks.
Mrs. S.M. Durkee.

There are probably half a dozen other sufferers whose names have not been reported, and these, with those who have recovered, make a total of about fifty who have thus far been stricken down by the disease.

Tonight, a consultation is in progress between Dr. Ullry of the State Board of Health, who has just arrived from Springfield, Dr. Ellis of Kankakee, and Dr. Keyser of this village.

None of the cases are fresh ones, so there is hope that the disease will be kept from spreading beyond those originally affected. Four or five cases tonight are reported as critical, and there may be more deaths before morning.

The Malady first appeared last Wednesday night, though its prevalence did not become known till some forty-eight hours afterwards. The symptoms at first were almost identical with cholera-morbus, and the sufferers were treated for this. When they got no better, and it was found that people in all parts of the village were affected had partaken Wednesday evening of dried beef bought at Scramlin's butcher Store. According to the statement of the villagers, he is in the habit of getting his meat from the Rice Butchers' Supply Company of West Jackson Street, Chicago. Wednesday last a great many people were supplied with dried beef from the same cut. Mr. Scramlin and two members of his family were taken dangerously ill, and this fact served to warn others who had bought meat at his market in time to prevent a more general consumption of the tainted meat. Though it is nearly a week since the first appearance of the trouble the majority of the patients are still quite ill, and many of them are said to suffer great pain.

SYMPTOMS AND TREATMENT

Their illness has been marked by looseness of the bowels, resembling those of typhoid-fever, bad breath, and a fierce fever, coming and going at intervals, and leaving the patient very much exhausted. The evidences of poisoning are very acute, but do not resemble trichinosis. Drs. Keyser and Ellis, who have had experience in treating the latter trouble, both agree in this. Dr. Keyser has also examined the diseased beef under microscope and declares that the animalcular are not trichinae. He describes them as greatly resembling a garter-snake. It is also said by some that the beef was spoiled before it was cured.

The treatment of the patients, since it was discovered that the malady was not cholera-morbus, has been mainly to relieve the great pain of which they complained. A number are constantly delirious, but others, when not in a stupor from the opiates administered, describe their feeling as those of great languor, and the few days' sickness seems to have taken away all their strength. The flesh is greatly reduced, and one man who is not getting better is said to have lost twenty-three pounds. It has not been possible during the week to secure medical attendance enough, and the two doctors who have looked after the wants of the sick night and day are themselves nearly prostrated with fatigue.

One of the first to be taken sick was Dr. Shronts, and the disease in his family took on its severest form, all the members being prostrated. Sunday afternoon Mrs. Shronts died, suffering, it is said, awful agony and plucking the hair from her own head in the delirium. The servant-girl is one of those who is not

expected to live till morning. The community is worn out with the care of the sick ones, who require constant attention. The feeling tonight is, however, more cheerful than it has been for days past, and hope is universal that in most of the cases the crisis is past, and the visitation will not be marked by many deaths. Everything possible is done to ameliorate the condition of the sufferers, but it is apparent that the malady must run its course, as the patients show no improvement after a certain stage.

ORIGIN OF THE DISEASE

Steps have been taken to establish definitely the cause of the disease appearing in the community, and the investigations already made seem to show that there can be no question that it originated in eating the diseased dried beef. It has been found that every person who has been on the list of those taken suddenly ill last Wednesday night ate of the dried beef bought of Scramlin, and they all were attacked within from two to five hours after eating. Members of families where there are several patients say those who did not partake of the beef uniformly escaped. It is also stated that the severity of the sickness has to some extent been measured by the quantity of the meat eaten. Some of the dried beef was taken to Chicago yesterday for a microscopical and chemical analysis. It is possible the results there obtained will develop the exact nature of the disease, but that it is not identical with trichinosis the examination already made indicates c. early.

It cannot be learned here whether the same article was shipped by the Chicago firm to other parts of the State or not, but the people of Momence are now demanding that the State Board of Health follow up the matter vigorously, which the information already at hand would seem to make an easy matter. Dr. Ellis will probably return to Kankakee in the morning, while Dr. Utley will remain long enough to get, if possible, a post-mortem and to gather the facts that will be of use to the State Board.

THE CHICAGO DEALER

“Hoag is one of our regular customers,” said Isaac Rice last night. “We sold him thirty or forty pounds of dried beef last week. Of late we have been getting all our dried beef of George Brougham, the Kinzie street packer, and the meat we sold to Hoag was got at Brougham’s. It appeared fresh and sweet, or we would not have sold it. Brougham smokes the beef every week and we get our supply regularly, and generally dispose of it in a day or two. Our trade is mostly with country buyers. Hoag was a small buyer, never taking more than thirty or forty pounds at a time. Smoked meat will keep all summer if properly cured. I never heard of trichina in beef before, and it seems strange that the many other parties to whom we sold quantities of this same beef should never have sent in a word of complaint. Any meat will breed worms if left to itself in hot weather, but worms are not poisonous. My system is to examine all meat that comes in by smelling and testing it in all parts of the piece, and the test never fails. I never had any meat returned on account of being wormy or unsound, but some has been brought back because not cured enough.”

Mr. Brougham, of whom the Rice Supply Company say they got their meat, said last night that he did not furnish it to them. He was at a loss to account for the poisoning, as he knew of nothing in the

Dr. John Shronts

Maryette Smith Shronts wife of Dr. John Shronts died from eating the dried beef on July 12, 1885. John and son Claude also became ill from eating the dried beef, but recovered. In 1886 John Shronts married Ida Wicks. Claude Shronts graduated from Northwestern University with a degree in Mental Pathology. In 1906 Claude was employed at the Illinois Eastern Hospital in Kankakee. I never did find out if the Shronts family servant -girl recovered or not.

Picture courtesy of the Graham Historic House